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Chihiro Uematsu

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EXAMINER

MUMMERT, STEPHANIE KANE

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PAPER

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/759,179	Applicant(s) UEMATSU ET AL.	
	Examiner Stephanie K. Mummert, Ph.D.	Art Unit 1637	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 25 September 2007.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-14 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 10-13 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-9 and 14 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Applicant's arguments in the appeal brief regarding the previous grounds of rejection were persuasive. Therefore, the finality of that action is withdrawn.

Applicant's amendment filed on September 25, 2007 is acknowledged and has been entered. Claims 1-9 and 14 are pending. Claims 10-13 are withdrawn from consideration as being drawn to a non-elected invention.

Claims 1-9 and 14 are discussed in this Office action.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments, see p. 12-31 of appeal brief, filed September 25, 2007, with respect to the rejection(s) of claim(s) 1-9 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentable over a combination of Wenz, Olyn, Livak, Eun and Rizzo or the rejection of claims 1-7 under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being unpatentable over Wenz, Leone, Bass and Mackay have been fully considered and are persuasive. Therefore, the rejections have been withdrawn. However, upon further consideration, a new ground(s) of rejection is made in view of Whitcombe et al..

Any rejection not reiterated in this action has been withdrawn as being obviated by the amendment of the claims. The text of those sections of Title 35, U.S. Code not included in this action can be found in a prior Office action.

This action is made **NON-FINAL**.

New Grounds of Rejection

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 1031

I. Claims 1-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Whitcombe et al. (Clinical Chemistry, 1998, 44(5), p. 918-923) in view of Oryn et al. (6,101,681; August 2000). Whitcombe teaches a method of amplification and fluorescence detection using a technique that is 'universal' and can allow for single tube genotyping of more than one target (Abstract, Figure 1).

With regard to claim 1, Whitcombe teaches a method for expressed gene analysis comprising: subjecting a gene to be analyzed to nucleic acid amplification using a forward primer specifically hybridizing to the gene to be analyzed, a primer for introduction comprising a first base sequence closer to the 5' end of the primer than a third base sequence comprising a sequence specifically hybridizing to a target gene, the target gene having a base sequence, and comprising a second base sequence closer to the 5' end of the primer than the first base sequence (Figure 1, where the forward primer specifically hybridizes to the gene to be analyzed, see black arrow portion of primer comprising the target-specific base sequence; also the primer of Figure 1 comprises a first and second base sequence in addition to the target specific portion), a probe comprising a base sequence identical or complementary to the first base sequence (Figure 1, where the probe is complementary to a base sequence which is non-specific to the target) and labeled at one end with a fluorophore and at another end with a quencher (Figure 1, where the probe is complementary to a base sequence that is non-specific to the target and where the probe is labeled at one end with a fluorophore and another with a quencher), digesting the probe bound

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to the first base sequence by the ribonuclease H or exonuclease at the time of the nucleic acid amplification (bottom of Figure 1, where the probe is digested); and detecting fluorescence emitted by the released fluorophore, thereby assaying the amount of the product of the nucleic acid amplification (Figure 2, where the amount of fluorescence emitted by the fluorophore is detected to assay the amount of product of nucleic acid amplification), wherein the gene to be analyzed is prepared by the introduction of the first base sequence being nonspecific to the base sequence of the target gene and the second base sequence, into the target gene so that the second base sequence is bound to a position closer to a 5' end of the gene to be analyzed than the first base sequence (Figure 1, where the forward primer specifically hybridizes to the gene to be analyzed, see black arrow portion of primer comprising the third target-specific base sequence; also the primer of Figure 1 comprises a first and second base sequence in addition to the target specific portion which are nonspecific to the base sequence of the target).

With regard to claim 8, Whitcombe teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein two or more target genes are simultaneously detected in a single reaction vessel using two or more types of probes (Figure 2, where more than one probe is used to detect two or more targets in a single tube; see Table 1, where the FAM and TET probes are depicted).

With regard to claim 9, Whitcombe teaches an embodiment of claim 8, wherein the melting temperatures (T_m values) of the two or more types of probes are substantially the same (Figure 2, where more than one probe is used to detect two or more targets in a single tube; see Table 1, where the FAM and TET probes are depicted).

Regarding claim 1, Whitcombe does not teach the inclusion of reverse transcriptase, RNA polymerase, and ribonuclease H and/or exonuclease and also does not teach that the second

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base sequence comprising a promoter sequence of RNA polymerase, into the target gene so that the second base sequence is bound to a position closer to a 5' end of the gene to be analyzed than the first base sequence.

With regard to claim 1, Ovyn teaches a method for expressed gene analysis, which comprises the steps of: A) subjecting a gene to be analyzed to nucleic acid amplification using 2) a primer for introduction comprising a second base sequence closer to the 5' end of the primer than the first base sequence (col. 4, lines 48-62, where the primer may include a promoter sequence) 4) reverse transcriptase (col. 2, lines 65-66; see also Figure 1, where the reverse transcriptase is AMV-RT), 5) RNA polymerase (col. 2, lines 65-66, where the RNA polymerase is T7 RNA polymerase, see also Figure 1), and 6) ribonuclease H and/or exonuclease (col. 2, lines 65-66, see Figure 1); and

C) detecting fluorescence emitted by the released fluorophore, thereby assaying the amount of the product of the nucleic acid amplification (col. 9, lines 45-55, where detection probes were hybridized to horseradish peroxidase and the amount of HRP conjugated oligonucleotides was measured to detect target sequence; however as noted at col. 6, lines 30-37, the probe may also be labeled by fluorescent moieties),

wherein the gene to be analyzed is prepared by the introduction of the first base sequence and the second base sequence comprising a promoter sequence of RNA polymerase, which are non-specific to the base sequence of the target gene, into the target gene so that the second base sequence is bound to a position closer to the 5' end of the gene to be analyzed than the first base sequence (see Figure 1 and description recited above).

With regard to claim 2, Ovyn teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein the gene to be analyzed is cDNA comprising the first base sequence and the second base sequence introduced therein by the introduction with subjecting mRNA of the target gene to reverse transcription using the primer for introduction which comprises the first base sequence as described for claim 1 above, in step A) 2) (col. 5, lines 46-64, where primer P1 hybridizes to the RNA to prime and initiate 1st strand synthesis and where after second strand synthesis, the complete cDNA includes the T7 promoter site from the P1 primer).

With regard to claims 3 and 4, Ovyn teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein the nucleic acid amplification is conducted by sequentially repeating the following steps 1) to 3):

- 1) transcription of the gene to be analyzed into RNA with the aid of RNA polymerase (col. 5, lines 46-67, see also Figure 1);
- 2) reverse transcription of the RNA using the forward primer and the reverse transcriptase or ribonuclease H to synthesize single-stranded cDNA (see Figure 1); and
- 3) synthesis of the gene to be analyzed from the single-stranded cDNA using the primer for introduction and DNA polymerase (col. 5, lines 46-67 and Figure 1).

With regard to claim 5, Ovyn teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein the nucleic acid amplification is conducted at a substantially single temperature (col. 10, lines 15-25, where isothermal amplification of the target RNA was performed at 41°C).

With regard to claim 6, Ovyn teaches an embodiment of claim 5, wherein the single temperature is between 37°C and 55°C (col. 10, lines 15-25, where isothermal amplification of the target RNA was performed at 41°C and wherein 41°C is between 37°C and 55°C).

With regard to claim 7, Ovyn teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein the RNA polymerase is T7 RNA polymerase and the second base sequence comprises the T7 promoter sequence (col. 5, lines 46-64, where primer P1 hybridizes to the RNA to prime and initiate 1st strand synthesis and where after second strand synthesis, the complete cDNA includes the T7 promoter site from the P1 primer; see also Figure 1).

It would have been prima facie obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to apply the primer formulation, including a target-specific component and a target non-specific component specific to the probe sequence taught by Whitcombe into the method of NASBA amplification taught generally by Ovyn to arrive at the claimed invention with a reasonable expectation for success. Whitcombe teaches a method called Three-STAR which is "universal in that it can either use a single probe for the detection of any one target DNA sequence or a single pair of probes for genotyping any bi-allelic polymorphism" and is "particularly useful for the single-tube genotyping of a variety of human DNA polymorphisms" (Abstract). Furthermore, Whitcombe teaches "we have devised a way to make TaqMan generic in as much that just one fluorogenic probe can be universally applied in any PCR reaction" (p. 921, col. 1-2). Furthermore, the inclusion of a third primer portion, comprising an RNA promoter sequence, would have also been an obvious and necessary substitution to the three-part primer described by Whitcombe for the use of the primers in a NASBA amplification format as taught by Ovyn. Regarding the application of this primer format to additional means of amplification, Ovyn teaches a method known as nucleic acid sequence based amplification (NASBA) (col. 2, lines 46-49). Ovyn describes NASBA as "an amplification system that has significant advantages over PCR amplification systems" because it "requires less user

participation and fewer manipulations and steps" and "each cycle of the amplification process generates a plurality of RNA copies from one substrate" (col. 2, lines 49-59). Due to the advantage of generating a plurality of RNA copies, one of ordinary skill would have been motivated minimally to incorporate the features of NASBA taught by Ovyn, into the method of amplification taught by Whitcombe, including incorporating the promoter sequence into the primer for generation of additional RNA copies with a reasonable expectation for success.

2. Claim 14 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Whitcombe et al. (Clinical Chemistry, 1998, 44(5), p. 918-923) in view of Ovyn et al. (6,101,681; August 2000) as applied to claims 1-9 above and further in view of Rizzo et al. (Molecular and Cellular Probes, 2002, vol. 16, p. 277-283). Whitcombe teaches a method of amplification and fluorescence detection using a technique that is 'universal' and can allow for single tube genotyping of more than one target (Abstract, Figure 1).

Whitcombe in view of Ovyn teach the limitations of claims 1-9. Neither Whitcombe or Ovyn teach a probe that is a DNA/RNA hybrid. Rizzo teaches that the probe for detection is labeled at one end with a quencher and that the probe is digested by ribonuclease H (Figure 1, where the probe is a molecular beacon and is labeled at one end with a quencher and at the other end with a fluorophore).

Regarding claim 14, Rizzo teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein the probe is a DNA/RNA hybrid (Figure 1, where the probe is comprised of an RNA:DNA hybrid stem).

It would have been *prima facie* obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the method of expressed gene analysis taught by Ovyn to

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incorporate an RNA/DNA hybrid probe of the type disclosed by Rizzo. Rizzo states that “here we describe the preparation of an RNA/DNA chimeric molecular beacon, which contains a single-stranded RNA-DNA chimeric oligonucleotide labeled with a 5’ fluorescein as fluorophore and a 3’-DABCYL as quencher (Figure 1). The fluorophore of the probe is held in proximity to the quencher by the stem-loop structure. When the RNA sequence of the RNA:DNA hybrid stem is cleaved, the fluorescence of the fluorophore is manifested.” (p. 278, col. 1, 2 paragraph). Furthermore, Rizzo notes that “the chimeric molecular beacon assay for RNase H is highly sensitive with fluorescent enhancement of up to 40-fold.” (p. 282, conclusions). While the chimeric beacon disclosed by Rizzo was not disclosed in the detection of nucleic acids in a format where RNase H was present, noting the teaching by Rizzo of a molecular beacon with sensitivity to RNase H activity, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of NASBA amplification, a method in which RNase H is often included, to incorporate the molecular beacon disclosed by Rizzo into the method of amplification and detection taught by Ovyn with a reasonable expectation for success.

3. Claims 1-9 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Whitcombe et al. (Clinical Chemistry, 1998, 44(5), p. 918-923) in view of Leone et al. (1998, Nucleic Acids Research, vol. 26, no. 9, p. 2150-2155) as evidenced by Leone et al. (1997, J. Virol. Methods, 66, 19-27). Whitcombe teaches a method of amplification and fluorescence detection using a technique that is ‘universal’ and can allow for single tube genotyping of more than one target (Abstract, Figure 1).

With regard to claim 1, Whitcombe teaches a method for expressed gene analysis comprising: subjecting a gene to be analyzed to nucleic acid amplification using a forward primer specifically hybridizing to the gene to be analyzed, a primer for introduction comprising a first base sequence closer to the 5' end of the primer than a third base sequence comprising a sequence specifically hybridizing to a target gene, the target gene having a base sequence, and comprising a second base sequence closer to the 5' end of the primer than the first base sequence (Figure 1, where the forward primer specifically hybridizes to the gene to be analyzed, see black arrow portion of primer comprising the target-specific base sequence; also the primer of Figure 1 comprises a first and second base sequence in addition to the target specific portion), a probe comprising a base sequence identical or complementary to the first base sequence (Figure 1, where the probe is complementary to a base sequence which is non-specific to the target) and labeled at one end with a fluorophore and at another end with a quencher (Figure 1, where the probe is complementary to a base sequence that is non-specific to the target and where the probe is labeled at one end with a fluorophore and another with a quencher), digesting the probe bound to the first base sequence by the ribonuclease H or exonuclease at the time of the nucleic acid amplification (bottom of Figure 1, where the probe is digested); and detecting fluorescence emitted by the released fluorophore, thereby assaying the amount of the product of the nucleic acid amplification (Figure 2, where the amount of fluorescence emitted by the fluorophore is detected to assay the amount of product of nucleic acid amplification), wherein the gene to be analyzed is prepared by the introduction of the first base sequence being nonspecific to the base sequence of the target gene and the second base sequence, into the target gene so that the second base sequence is bound to a position closer to a 5' end of the gene to be

analyzed than the first base sequence (Figure 1, where the forward primer specifically hybridizes to the gene to be analyzed, see black arrow portion of primer comprising the third target-specific base sequence; also the primer of Figure 1 comprises a first and second base sequence in addition to the target specific portion which are nonspecific to the base sequence of the target).

With regard to claim 8, Whitcombe teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein two or more target genes are simultaneously detected in a single reaction vessel using two or more types of probes (Figure 2, where more than one probe is used to detect two or more targets in a single tube; see Table 1, where the FAM and TET probes are depicted).

With regard to claim 9, Whitcombe teaches an embodiment of claim 8, wherein the melting temperatures (T_m values) of the two or more types of probes are substantially the same (Figure 2, where more than one probe is used to detect two or more targets in a single tube; see Table 1, where the FAM and TET probes are depicted).

Regarding claim 1, Whitcombe does not teach that the primer for introduction comprises a second base sequence comprising a promoter sequence of RNA polymerase, which is non-specific to the base sequence of the target gene. Whitcombe also does not teach that the amplification of the gene is accomplished using reverse transcriptase, RNA polymerase and ribonuclease H and/or exonuclease. Leone discloses the use of molecular beacon probes in the detection of nucleic acids amplified by the NASBA technique (Abstract).

With regard to claim 1, Leone teaches a method for expressed gene analysis, which comprises the steps of: A) subjecting a gene to be analyzed to nucleic acid amplification using 1) a forward primer specifically hybridizing to the gene to be analyzed (p. 2151, col. 1, 'selection of amplification primers and probe' heading, where PD415 or PD416 are antisense primers and

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PD417 is a sense primer, which were designed to amplify the coat protein open reading frame), 2) a primer for introduction comprising a second base sequence closer to the 5' end of the primer than the first base sequence (p. 2154, Figure 6, legend, where it is noted that the amplicon formed by PD415-PD417 or PD416-PD417 contain a binding site for the T7 RNA polymerase, in addition to complementarity to the target sequence, as described in more detail in Leone et al. 1997, J. Virol. Methods, 66, 19-27, see Table 1, where the sequences of PD415-PD417 are given and also the '2.2 Selection of amplification primers and detection probe' heading, where "the antisense ones consisted of a 3' terminal target specific sequence and a 5' terminal T7 promoter sequence"), 3) a probe comprising a base sequence identical or complementary to the first base sequence and labeled at one end with a fluorophore (p. 2151, col. 1, 'synthesis of the molecular beacons' heading, where a molecular beacon sw75-F1 was designed to bind to nucleotides within the coat protein ORF of PLRV, with DABCYL at the 3' end and fluoroscein at the 5' end), 4) reverse transcriptase (p. 2151, 'NASBA' heading, where the reverse transcriptase was included as part of the enzyme mix, which included 6.4 U AMV-reverse transcriptase), 5) RNA polymerase (p. 2151, 'NASBA' heading, where the RNA polymerase is T7 and 32 U are included in the enzyme mix), and 6) ribonuclease H and/or exonuclease (p. 2151, 'NASBA' heading, where 0.08 U RNase H is included in the enzyme mix); and C) detecting fluorescence emitted by the released fluorophore, thereby assaying the amount of the product of the nucleic acid amplification (p. 2151, col. 2 'post-NASBA analysis' and 'Real-time monitoring of NASBA reactions and thermal denaturation profiles' heading, see also Figure 2), wherein the gene to be analyzed is prepared by the introduction of the first base sequence and the second base sequence comprising a promoter sequence of RNA polymerase, which are

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non-specific to the base sequence of the target gene, into the target gene so that the second base sequence is bound to a position closer to the 5' end of the gene to be analyzed than the first base sequence.

With regard to claim 2, Leone teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein the gene to be analyzed is cDNA comprising the first base sequence and the second base sequence introduced therein by the introduction with subjecting mRNA of the target gene to reverse transcription using a primer for introduction which comprises the first base sequence as described for claim 1 above, in step A) 2) (see description above for Step A) 2), also p. 2150, col. 1, where the process of NASBA is described in more detail, where the reaction is based on the concurrent activity of AMV-RT, RNase H and T7 polymerase).

With regard to claims 3 and 4, Leone teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein the nucleic acid amplification is conducted by sequentially repeating the following steps 1) to 3):

- 1) transcription of the gene to analyzed into RNA with the aid of RNA polymerase;
- 2) reverse transcription of the RNA using the forward primer and the reverse transcriptase or ribonuclease H to synthesize single-stranded cDNA; and
- 3) synthesis of the gene to be analyzed from the single-stranded cDNA using the primer for introduction and DNA polymerase (p. 2150, col. 1, where the process of NASBA is described in more detail, where the reaction is based on the concurrent activity of AMV-RT, RNase H and T7 polymerase in repetition and where the activity of these enzymes would include each of the preceeding steps recited, including transcription with an RNA polymerase, reverse transcription, and synthesis of the gene using DNA polymerase).

With regard to claim 5, Leone teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein the nucleic acid amplification is conducted at a substantially single temperature (p. 2151, 'NASBA' heading, where besides an incubation at 65°C prior to introduction of the enzyme mix, the reaction occurred at 41°C).

With regard to claim 6, Leone teaches an embodiment of claim 5, wherein the single temperature is between 37°C and 55°C (p. 2151, 'NASBA' heading, where besides an incubation at 65°C prior to introduction of the enzyme mix, the reaction occurred at 41°C).

With regard to claim 7, Leone teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein the RNA polymerase is T7 RNA polymerase and the second base sequence comprises the T7 promoter sequence (p. 2154, Figure 6, legend, where it is noted that the amplicon formed by PD415-PD417 or PD416-PD417 contain a binding site for the T7 RNA polymerase, in addition to complementarity to the target sequence, as described in more detail in Leone et al. 1997, J. Virol. Methods, 66, 19-27, see Table 1, where the sequences of PD415-PD417 are given and also the '2.2 Selection of amplification primers and detection probe' heading, where "the antisense ones consisted of a 3' terminal target specific sequence and a 5' terminal T7 promoter sequence").

It would have been prima facie obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to apply the primer formulation, including a target-specific component and a target non-specific component specific to the probe sequence taught by Whitcombe into the method of NASBA amplification taught generally by Leone to arrive at the claimed invention with a reasonable expectation for success. Whitcombe teaches a method called Three-STAR which is "universal in that it can either use a single probe for the detection of any one target DNA sequence or a single pair of probes for genotyping any bi-allelic polymorphism" and is

"particularly useful for the single-tube genotyping of a variety of human DNA polymorphisms" (Abstract). Furthermore, Whitcombe teaches "we have devised a way to make TaqMan generic in as much that just one fluorogenic probe can be universally applied in any PCR reaction" (p. 921, col. 1-2). Furthermore, the inclusion of a third primer portion, comprising an RNA promoter sequence, would have also been an obvious and necessary substitution to the three-part primer described by Whitcombe for the use of the primers in a NASBA amplification format as taught by Leone. Regarding the application of this primer format to additional means of amplification, Leone teaches a method known as nucleic acid sequence based amplification (NASBA) (p. 2150, Abstract, col. 1). Leone states "with respect to other amplification systems such as the PCR technique, the ability of NASBA to homogeneously and isothermally amplify RNA analytes (e.g., viral genomic RNA, mRNA or rRNA) extends its application range from viral diagnostics to the indication of biological activities such as gene expression and cell viability" (p. 2150, col. 1). Leone also states that NASBA "results in exponential amplification of RNA and DNA products within 90 min, producing as the major amplification product antisense, single-stranded RNA" (p. 2150, col. 1). Due to the advantage of generating a plurality of RNA copies, one of ordinary skill would have been motivated minimally to incorporate the features of NASBA taught by Leone, into the method of amplification taught by Whitcombe, including incorporating the promoter sequence into the primer for generation of additional RNA copies with a reasonable expectation for success.

Finally, the commonality of detection, as taught by Leone, describing "the coupling of RNA amplification by NASBA with amplicon detection by molecular beacons technology to produce a truly homogeneous RNA assay, called AmpliDet RNA" and report "how molecular

beacons improve NASBA, enabling a one-tube assay suitable for high-throughput applications without compromising specificity and sensitivity” (p. 2151, col. 1). Therefore, one of ordinary skill would have been motivated to incorporate the promoter sequence taught by Leone into the primer formation taught by Whitcombe to achieve one-tube, high throughput assay of nucleic acid targets with a reasonable expectation for success.

4. Claim 14 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Whitcombe et al. (Clinical Chemistry, 1998, 44(5), p. 918-923) in view of Leone et al. (1998, Nucleic Acids Research, vol. 26, no. 9, p. 2150-2155) as evidenced by Leone et al. (1997, J. Virol. Methods, 66, 19-27) as applied to claims 1-9 above and further in view of Rizzo et al. (Molecular and Cellular Probes, 2002, vol. 16, p. 277-283). Whitcombe teaches a method of amplification and fluorescence detection using a technique that is ‘universal’ and can allow for single tube genotyping of more than one target (Abstract, Figure 1).

Whitcombe in view of Leone teach the limitations of claims 1-9. Neither Whitcombe or Leone teach a probe that is a DNA/RNA hybrid. Rizzo teaches that the probe for detection is labeled at one end with a quencher and that the probe is digested by ribonuclease H (Figure 1, where the probe is a molecular beacon and is labeled at one end with a quencher and at the other end with a fluorophore).

Regarding claim 14, Rizzo teaches an embodiment of claim 1, wherein the probe is a DNA/RNA hybrid (Figure 1, where the probe is comprised of an RNA:DNA hybrid stem).

It would have been *prima facie* obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to have modified the method of expressed gene analysis taught by Leone to

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incorporate an RNA/DNA hybrid probe of the type disclosed by Rizzo. Rizzo states that “here we describe the preparation of an RNA/DNA chimeric molecular beacon, which contains a single-stranded RNA-DNA chimeric oligonucleotide labeled with a 5’ fluorescein as fluorophore and a 3’-DABCYL as quencher (Figure 1). The fluorophore of the probe is held in proximity to the quencher by the stem-loop structure. When the RNA sequence of the RNA:DNA hybrid stem is cleaved, the fluorescence of the fluorophore is manifested.” (p. 278, col. 1, 2 paragraph). Furthermore, Rizzo notes that “the chimeric molecular beacon assay for RNase H is highly sensitive with fluorescent enhancement of up to 40-fold.” (p. 282, conclusions). While the chimeric beacon disclosed by Rizzo was not disclosed in the detection of nucleic acids in a format where RNase H was present, noting the teaching by Rizzo of a molecular beacon with sensitivity to RNase H activity, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art of NASBA amplification, a method in which RNase H is often included, to incorporate the molecular beacon disclosed by Rizzo into the method of amplification and detection taught by Leone with a reasonable expectation for success.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-9 and 14 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection. While Applicant addresses the Olyn, Leone and Rizzo references still applied in the current action, these arguments are based primarily on how these references relate specifically in combination with Wenz. As the rejections in view of Wenz have been dropped and new grounds of rejection have been made in view of Whitcombe, these arguments are moot.

Related Prior Art

1. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. Yu et al. (WO03/038119; published May 2003) disclose a method of amplification of foot and mouth disease virus (FDMV) using NASBA with detection using chemiluminescence. Rossi et al. (US Patent 5,783,391; July 1998) disclose a method of amplification via cyclic amplification using reverse transcriptase and T7 RNA polymerase, however the ribonuclease is RNase A. de Barr et al. (2001, Journal of Clinical Microbiology, p. 1895-1902) disclose a method for isothermal amplification to identify multiple subtypes of HIV-1 using NASBA amplification and molecular beacons.

Conclusion

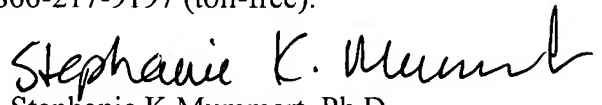
No claims are allowed.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Stephanie K. Mummert, Ph.D. whose telephone number is 571-272-8503. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F, 9:00-5:30.

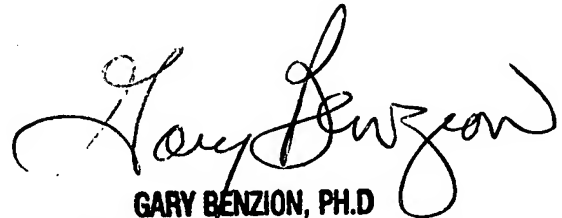
If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Gary Benzion can be reached on 571-272-0782. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


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